

In 1932, only about two-fifths of the population, outside the Toronto and Montreal districts, could get Canadian programs regularly. When they did, the fare was chiefly gramophone records. The average broadcasting time of all Canadian stations in 1932 was six hours and 15 minutes daily, of which only two hours and 15 minutes were programs using any Canadian talent whatever.

There was a tendency for the larger stations to become little more than agents for the big radio networks in the United States, Canada's neighbor to the south. Canadian talent and Canadian interests were being largely neglected, and it appeared that on a basis of purely commercial operation, radio would be lost as an effective means of Canadian development.

This state of affairs, developing through the twenties, brought action from the Canadian government in 1948. Three men -- a banker, a newspaper editor and an electrical engineer -- were named to form a Royal Commission, "to examine into the broadcasting situation in the Dominion of Canada and to make recommendations to the government as to the future administration, management, control and financing thereof."

The commission visited the United States, Great Britain, France and several other European countries to see how radio systems were conducted in other lands, and then returned to Canada to obtain a cross-section of Canadian opinion on the subject. The commission held sittings in twenty-five Canadian cities, and received briefs from farm and labor organizations and other public bodies, as well as from individuals. It turned in its report in 1929.

The Commission based its findings on the submissions it had received, and on a number of facts uniquely Canadian. Canada is a huge country, and many Canadian communities are widely separated. Not only are there two official languages, but the country is divided into nine provinces, most of them having different interests, traditions, and cultural backgrounds.

The conditioning factors of vast distances, scattered population, and regional differences led to the conception of a nationally-owned and controlled broadcasting system, behind which, in the words of the Commission's report, would be the power and prestige of the whole public of the Dominion of Canada.

The individual operation of radio stations, no matter how effective locally, could not meet the handicaps of great distances in providing a program service that would balance fairly the different cultural, racial and regional interests in Canada. Sometimes even now, it is necessary to rent from the wire-line companies more than 25 thousand miles of wire to link the radio stations in Canada. On a commercial basis, this and other heavy operating costs would have required the sale of all Canadian radio time.

The objective was broadcasting in the public interest; the use of radio as a means of Canadian development; and the use of Canadian talent. The Royal Commission recommended that a licence fee be paid by the listeners, supplemented by commercial revenue, should be the primary basis of financing broadcasting in Canada; and that a nationally-owned company should be set up to operate a